



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

3D BATTALION, 8TH MARINE REGIMENT
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-WEST
I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (FORWARD)
UNIT 73275
FPOAE 09509-3275

IN REPLY REFER TO:

5757

G-3

01 Jun 06

From: Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion, 8th Marines
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (HDH-4)
Via: Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (FORWARD)


Subj: 3D BATTALION, 8TH MARINES COMMAND CHRONOLOGY

Encl: (1) 3d Battalion, 8th Marines Command Chronology for the month
of May 2006.

1. The 3d Battalion, 8th Marines Command Chronology covers the period from 1 May to 31 May 2006. Classified documents pertinent to the conduct of combat operations during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) 05-07, to include the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, are available on the I MEF (Fwd) classified website: www.mnfw.usmc.smil.mil. Copies of these critical documents will accompany the final command chronology. 3d Battalion, 8th Marines will continue to submit subsequent command chronologies on a monthly basis while deployed to OIF 05-07.

2. Digital signature / document scanner not available.

3. Point of contact for this submission is (b) (6) at
TAC (b) (6), (b) (6)


(b) (6)

Command Chronology 01 MAY 06 to 31 MAY 06
Section I: Administration

UNIT DESIGNATION

Reporting Unit Code: 12230

Location: Hurricane Point, Ar Ramadi, Iraq

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

COMMANDING OFFICER

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS

INDIA COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

KILO COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

LIMA COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

WEAPONS COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

H & S COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

PRINCIPAL STAFF MEMBERS

S-1

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

S-2

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

S-3

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

S-3A

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

S-4

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

S-6

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

AIR OFFICER

(b) (6) 01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

FACS

(b) (6)

08 MAY 06 - 15 MAY 06
01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06
01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

BATTALION SURGEON

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

MEDICAL OFFICER

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

BN GUNNER

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

CHAPLAIN

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

COMMAND HISTORIAN

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

SERGEANT MAJOR AND SENIOR ENLISTED

SERGEANT MAJOR

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

S-3 CHIEF

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

INDIA COMPANY

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

KILO COMPANY

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

LIMA COMPANY

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

WEAPONS COMPANY

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

H & S COMPANY

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

MEDICAL

(b) (6)

01 MAY 06 - 31 MAY 06

AVERAGE TASK FORCE STRENGTH

MARINE OFFICER: 46

MARINE ENLISTED: 873

NAVY OFFICER: 4

NAVY ENLISTED: 58

CIVILIAN: 1

ARMY ENLISTED: 9

AIR FORCE ENLISTED: 1

AVERAGE TOTAL STRENGTH: 995

LEGAL

BATTALION NJPS: 3

SUMMARY COURT MARTIALS: 0

SPECIAL COURT MARTIALS: 0

GENERAL COURT MARTIALS: 0

INVESTIGATIONS: 2 EOF

DETENTION OPERATIONS: 62 DETAINEES PROCESSED

AWARDS APPROVED BY THE BN CO

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION: 0

MERITORIOUS MASTS: 0

CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION: 2

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER SERVICE MEDAL: 0

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL: 12

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL WITH COMBAT "V": 2

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS COMMENDATION MEDAL: 1

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS COMMENDATION MEDAL WITH COMBAT "V": 1

Command Chronology 01 MAY 06 to 31 MAY 06
Section II: Narrative Summary

S-2

During the month of May the Task Force 3/8 Intelligence Shop continued to refine targeting data and trend analysis. Targeting in the S-2 has adapted significantly in order to address targets in the complex urban environment of Ramadi. The Battalion, as a whole, has continued with its' aggressive targeting and patrolling operations in zone. The individual companies' operational tempo has allowed for human targets to be rapidly addressed, thus keeping the enemy off balance in areas that they historically utilized as safe havens.

The Intelligence Shop is in charge of operating the UAV that is in support of the battalion daily, as well as constantly tracking friendly units throughout the AO and revising the Battle Update Brief. The production of the Battle Update Brief is very time consuming, but allows the entire Battalion to remain aware of the events that are affecting them on a daily basis. These tasks are accomplished from the watch floor. While the watch floor SOP is constantly being developed to address new issues that arise in the AO, the present SOP in place on the watch floor is sophisticated enough to accomplish a multitude of tasks.

A continuing task for the S-2 throughout the deployment has been to maintain the Share Drive. Constant maintenance and upkeep of the Share Drive has allowed the shop to streamline the information available to the Battalion and allows for easy access to reports that need to be referenced at a later time.

During the month of May the S-2 continued to develop its' relationship with the Ground Sensor platoon and the Radio Battalion. The Ground Sensor and Radio Battalion assets have both served as force multipliers during the Battalion's tenure in the AO.

Future operations of the Intelligence Shop will consist of constant revision of targeting operations as well as preparation for the arrival of the 1/6 PDSS.

S-3

On 01 May 2006, the Battalion Operations Officer was promoted to Major. In addition, The Operations Section received an Electronic Warfare Officer (USN) as a permanent attachment. The S-3 continues to support enduring task within 3/8 battle space. The enduring task in zone consists of the following types of operations: Mounted/Dismounted Patrols, snap vehicle checkpoints, ambush patrols, over watch positions, fixed site security, census patrols, mosque monitoring, and cordon and searches. The Combat Operations Center (COC) provided command and control to several significant events throughout the battle space. These significant events include Iraqi Police (IP) screenings, IP implementation at Western Ramadi Police Station, Iraqi Army recruitments, multiple complex attacks against fixed site positions, and detainment of possible insurgents within the battle space.

May proved to be a month in which the Operations Section focused on continued AO development and the effort to continue ties with the local, governmental, and religious populace. The battalion focused heavily on its enduring task in zone. During the month of May the S-3A conducted AO orientation and Task Force 3/8 force layout briefs for the primary staff of newly arriving adjacent units and the primary staff of

1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division. 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division began their relief-in-place with 2BCT as the higher headquarters.

The Operations Section continued to develop the AO for the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police. Of significant note, the Iraqi Police from the West Ramadi Police Station conducted limited patrols in the C5 sector (CO L zone). These actions conducted by Iraqi Police will serve as a model for the Central Ramadi Police Station in the implementation of Iraqi Police in the central portion of the city.

Task Force 3/8 was engaged in continued combat operations during the month of May. While the companies were able to roll-up some caches and detainees, the number of IED and indirect fire incidents increased. While this proved to be an obstacle to vehicular movement and fixed site security, it also allowed the Operations Section to determine the enemy's IED TTP's and helped the S-3/S-3A to develop procedures to mitigate their effectiveness.

The Operations Officer and the Assistant Operations Officer assisted in the delivery of aviation ordnance on three different occasions while conducting operations in the COC. This ordnance consisted of three (3) Laser Mavericks. In addition, S-3/S-3A coordinated the delivery of three (3) GMLR rockets on the enemy. Debriefs and After Actions were conducted within the S-3 following each significant event. The Forward Air Controllers (FAC) continued to rotate every six days through OP Horea. The FACs continue to support TF Dagger missions and Battalion quick reaction force missions as required. The FACs continue to support enduring task in zone.

From 27 May 2006 to 31 May 2006 the Electronic Warfare Officer assisted in the reception of thirty five (35) new UAH's to the battalion. These vehicles were specifically equipped with a new Electronic Warfare Countermeasure (Chameleon). These high-power active jammers are designed to mitigate the specific IED threat the battalion faced in zone. On 30 May 2006, the first mounted patrol utilizing this system was struck by an IED on Ice Cream street. The mounted patrol consisted of a five vehicle patrol, of which four vehicles had the Chameleon. The commander's vehicle had Chameleon, but it was not active to allow effective communication to battalion. The EOD (Cougar) vehicle had Warlock Red/Green, but it was not active due to inner operability issues with Chameleon. The Battalion Electronic Warfare Officer determined after review that the system had a line of sight issue due to placement of vehicles in relation to the IED and triggerman. TF 3/8 is the first unit in theater to test this new electronic counter measure.

Towards the end of May, the S-3 held a section coordination meeting for future planning guidance and mid deployment after-action guidance. From this meeting came the Reset the Force FRAGO. Soon afterwards, the Marines of the Operations Section cycled through the required classes.

The S-3/Future Plans cell focused its final planning efforts in May on refinement to the original base order to help shape the rest of the deployment. The Operations Section also began initial planning for Mid-term training cycle, Redeployment, and Warrior Transition. The Operations Section also began to prepare for 1/6 PDSS arrival in mid June.

S-4

The S-4 Section was focused on the acquisition and installation of the electrical Bill of Materials (BOM) for the Battalion's FOBs as

the month of May began. The temperature was rising and it was becoming critical for the survivability of the Marines living in the FOBs to have electricity and a way to reduce the temperatures. On 03 May, the ECU's arrived from Al Taqqadum (TQ) and on 05 May half of the electrical BOM was picked up from the 9th NCR Class IV lot in TQ. The remainder of the electrical BOM was sourced from the 9th NCR Class IV Lot in Al Asad and was received on 08 May. The supplies were pushed to the Engineering Section to commence installation immediately. All electrical work required at the FOBs was completed by 25 May.

The S-4 Section was concurrently preparing for the Inspector General of the Marine Corps inspection team. Information pertaining to this inspection came during the month of April and the S-4 spent the first week of May putting the finishing touches on the section. The IG Team arrived on 06 May and conducted a walkthrough of the entire section. The IG Team flew out of Camp Ramadi on 07 May upon completion of their inspection.

Throughout the first half of the month of May, the Embark Section of the S-4 continued to focus on the ISO Container inventory directed by I MEF. Of the initial 160 ISO Containers that 3/8 owned, twenty two (22) of them were labeled as "detained" and required shipment back to the owning company. These containers were identified and segregated from the rest of the containers. The S-4 Section coordinated the lift, removal, and storage of these containers to ensure prompt removal from the account. Additionally, government owned containers were identified and pushed to Hurricane Point to replace the deficiency caused by the removal of three detained ISO's from Hurricane Point.

Additionally, throughout the month of May, the S-4 section made extensive preparations to support Operation General Hospital. These preparations included having a PLS attached operationally for the duration of the operation and Combat Train staged at Hurricane Point with an MTVR Wrecker in the event that a vehicle recover was required.

During the latter part of the month, the focus of the S-4 Section shifted to the fielding of the High Powered Jamming (HPJ) system known as Chameleon. The battalion received the first nine (9) of these new Up Armored HMMWVs (UAH's) on 26 May. Of these first nine, three (3) of these trucks had the new MCTAG turret upgrade. A deficiency was noted immediately with respect to a significant gap in the back of the turret that left the gunner exposed to shrapnel from below. The S-4 section immediately started drafting up solutions and looking for a unit aboard Camp Ramadi to assist in the development and installation of a modification to remove this gap without illegally modifying the HMMWV. On 30 May, 46th Engineers completed the first of these modifications and additional materials were cut and staged for further modifications.

The S-4 Section's primary escort elements, Combat Train and Field Train, remained busy throughout the month of May. Combat Train conducted over forty five (45) convoys throughout the AO providing security for CEB, escorting various logistical support, and recovering down or destroyed vehicles. Combat Train's escort enabled CEB to emplace over three hundred (300) barriers at various FOBs. Additionally, during the month of May Combat Train conducted ten (10) successful vehicle recover missions and escorted twelve (12) detainees from the temporary holding facility aboard Hurricane Point to the Ramadi Detention Facility (RDF) aboard Camp Ramadi.

Log Train continues to conduct runs to Hurricane Point and Snake Pit twice a day to deliver required logistical and life support. During the month of May, Log Train pushed over sixty (60) pallets of water to HP along with over 12,000 gallons of JP8. Twice a week, laundry is

picked up and dropped off from Hurricane Point and Snake Pit. Additionally, the Log Train escorts PX personnel to both locations three times per week. Log Train continues to escort the TOIFOR personnel for service of port-a-johns and trash bins and the Water Truck for resupply to Snake Pit. Log Train also continues to serve as the main shuttle between the FOBs and Camp Ramadi.

During the month of May, the Field Mess Section continued to serve over 400 Marines and sailors aboard Hurricane Point with three meals a day and over 200 meals aboard Snake Pit. The Field Mess Section still has two Marines on the Log Train to deliver Class I from the DEFAC aboard Camp Ramadi twice a day. New for the month of May was the delivery of a tray ration heater system to OP VA for the future feeding of Marines located there.

Maintenance always remains a priority for the battalion. During the past month, Special Equipment Item (SEI) maintenance and accountability continued to consume a large amount of time and effort. The battalion is still accounting for all of the SEI gear that is on Army accounts. Through the use of the 2-BCT Logistical Convoys that were conducting runs to TQ twice a week, the Maintenance section was able to pick up parts and equipment needed to speed up what would otherwise be a lengthy process. Additionally, all of the Pre-Existing Bins (PEB's) are now accounted for and authorized by the Commanding Officer. This was one of the deficiencies that was noted by the IG Team.

The Motor Transport Maintenance section conducted over seventy (70) quick fixes and opened approximately seventy five (75) ERO's on various pieces of rolling stock. During the month, the MT Section had to evacuate ten (10) vehicles to third echelon of maintenance and twenty seven (27) TPE Modifications were completed. Seventeen (17) Up Armored HMMWVs (UAH's) were evacuated to TQ for the installation of the Chameleon High Powered Jammer (HPJ) in addition to the new UAH's that were being received by the battalion.

Also critical to the maintenance of the battalion is the Armory Section. The Armory continued its bi-monthly visits to the Government Center to support Kilo Company. These visits were conducted on 07 May for gear maintenance and serviceability checks and again from 20 May to 23 May. On 16 and 17 May, the Armory section again visited the Government center for M240G Medium Machine Gun preventative maintenance checks and services (PMCS). Throughout the month of May, the armory fixed sixty seven (67) optics and eleven (11) weapons at the Battalion Armory. Two (2) weapons and twelve (12) optics were evacuated to the Intermediate Maintenance Facility (IMA) at Al Taqqadum. The Armory section is spread over the various FOBs with the Armory itself based out of Hurricane Point. There is one armorer still based at Camp Ramadi and one Armorer embedded with India Company at Blue Diamond. There are still two armory personnel on Camp Guard.

The supply section was again busy throughout the month of May receiving a constant influx of equipment and supplies while concurrently filling rapid requests from the companies and sections. Throughout the month of May, 88% of the ninety five received requests were filled. The supply officer submitted over \$75,000 worth of contracts through the Warfighter Open Purchase Request Router (WOPPR) for non-system, yet combat essential, equipment. Additionally, the second of three CMR reconciliations for the deployment were started and the Equipment Density Listing (EDL) Validation was completed. The largest issue that the Supply section was working for the month was the distribution and accountability plan of the new HPJ Chameleon ECM

Systems that were to be distributed to the 1/1 Armored Division. This plan was worked out with I MEF (Fwd) G-4 and was put into action.

S-6

During the month of May, the communications platoon continued to improve the communications architecture for the battalion. After gaining full accountability of all communications gear and getting used to the daily operations and maintenance of all communication systems, the shop began addressing current problems and requests. The largest project was the running of fiber to Camp Blue Diamond. This fiber run effectively doubled the bandwidth of the SIPR and NIPR for the battalion. Internally, many wiring changes were made that did not have an increase on the services available, but they did increase the reliability of the network. One of these key changes was the removal of individual phone lines and the replacement with 26-pair cable. The removal of dead phone/data wire was a continuous evolution throughout the month. The data section increased the number of computers that were online. Wire increased the number of phones by running a phone out to ECP South.

The beginning of the month began with EPLRS training. Marines and a civilian from Marine Corps Tactical System Support Activity (MCTSSA) visited Hurricane Point to provide communications training. The MCTSSA team instructed 3/8 Marines on how to successfully conduct an over the air re-key (OTAR). Instruction was given on the Mounted Data Automated Communications Terminal (MDACT). Having MCTSSA provide technical support proved to be a great help to the battalion.

The fiber run to Blue Diamond began with the Wire Chief and Communications officer doing a site-survey to determine if the route was feasible. The fiber route was determined to be feasible and the plan was presented. There were a few reservations from higher about making the run, but ultimately the decision was made to execute the plan. The key selling points for the fiber run were that it would increase bandwidth and reduce manpower requirements.

Before the fiber run was made to Blue Diamond, there were some generator problems. One of the MEP-803 generators was not functioning properly. The generator was leaking oil and it required maintenance. The generator was brought to the Combat Engineer Battalion in order to receive maintenance. A replacement generator was given in its place. The generator was wired into another MEP-803 generator in series. Having the generators in series allows one generator to be online with its backup generator already wired-in. Also, in addition to the two (2) MEP-803s, there is a MEP-805 standing by as a secondary backup.

At the beginning of the month, an Inspector General (IG) team came to Hurricane Point and inspected the communications shop. The visit was intended to check the accuracy of the consolidated memorandum report (CMR) and the maintenance status of those items. One of the items checked was the MRC-138 HF radio system. The system was assembled and op-checked. The system did not operate at all. The reason that these items were not being inducted into maintenance is that they're being phased out of the Marine Corps. At the end of the month, their replacement, the MRC-148, began showing up in Camp Ramadi. All discrepancies from the IG inspection had corrective actions taken during the month of May.

During the middle of the month, the Battalion Commander conducted a spot check on the COMSEC materials in 3/8's possession. The COMSEC inspection found that there were Marines that needed to be added to the

access rosters and that new safes with combination locks needed to be ordered. The safes that were in use had latch locks with padlocks. In order to be in compliance with EKMS-1, combination locks are required.

Two (2) EPLRS were installed into vehicles. One of the EPLRS radios was installed into a Human Exploitation Team (HET) vehicle. The other was installed into an S-2 vehicle. The mobile EPLRS radios were used extensively by both the S-2 and HET.

During the middle of the month, the tech shop installed mICE ECM systems. The installation of the mICE systems was done on a daily basis.

Also during the middle of the month, XTS-5000 batteries that were place on order during March finally arrived at the battalion. Forty (40) of these batteries were sent out to the Government Center in order to get their radios back online. The other batteries were used to supplement the other companies that had failing batteries.

Halfway through the month, the wire section successfully transitioned SIPR/NIPR and Voice from the MRC-142 to the fiber. The mission of running the fiber and getting the systems to work over the fiber was difficult. Lessons were learned with how to properly test fiber prior to running it. Another important lesson learned was about the GSC-54 fiber optic converter. Several days were spent troubleshooting mysterious problems with the GSC-54. The problem turned out to be that the GSC-54 does not receive timing from the fiber optic cable; it needs to receive timing from the CX-11230 to start working.

On 19 May, a 300 meter segment of fiber was damaged at Snakepit. A mortar attack severed the fiber cable that provided Snakepit with SIPRNET access. A wire/data team was dispatched to repair the wire. The damaged fiber was picked up and replaced with new fiber.

On 23 May, another 0621 arrived on deck. The radio operator was put into the COC watch rotation immediately.

Near the end of the month, the tech shop completed a pre-expended bin (PEB) database listing. The PEB database was given to the management maintenance officer (MMO). The PEB database listing gave the MMO the information he needed to sufficiently stock the PEB. This effectively corrected the PEB discrepancy noted during the IG inspection.

At the end of the month, there was a rash of viruses on the SIPRNET. After removing the viruses from several computers, the data section went around all SIPR computers and updated the virus definitions.

CHAPLAIN

Religious ministries provided ministry to two (2) Marine KIA and eleven (11) Marine WIA during the month of May, and conducted two (2) memorial services. Religious ministries also provided Reset the Force training in Combat Stress Prevention and Suicide Prevention to all Marines and sailors. The battalion Chaplain and RP visited and provided ministry to Marines and sailors at Government Center, North and South Entry Control Points, Camp Ramadi, Camp Blue Diamond and Snake Pit. Roman Catholic and Protestant services were facilitated for Hurricane Point and Camp Blue Diamond and Latter Day Saints services were facilitated at Camp Ramadi. Eastern Orthodox Services in support of Ramadi area were conducted at Hurricane Point and Camp Ramadi specifically supporting the Paschal (Easter) season. During the month of May religious ministries conducted seventeen (17) marital

counselings, twenty six (26) stress related counselings, and fourteen (14) grief related counselings. Toys and school supplies were also distributed to local Iraqi schools and arrangements for charitable contributions to support local ministry in Iraq were also coordinated.

MEDICAL

The BAS continued to provide sick call hours for the Marines of 3/8 as well as its attachments. The I MEF Dentist from Fallujah completed class three and four dental examinations at Camp Blue Diamond, Hurricane Point and Snake Pit. A structured nine-day FMF PQS class was implemented to prepare the 3/8 Corpsmen for their Enlisted Fleet Marine Force Warfare Qualification. Also during the month of May, elements of 1-6 Army Group medical incorporate into the Blue Diamond BAS.

INDIA COMPANY

On 01 May, two Marines were promoted to Lance Corporal and one was promoted to Corporal. On 02 May, Third Platoon conducted an observation post along Ice Cream from 0000 to 0645. During the observation post, a squad from Third Platoon conducted target refinement on target number 416 (Umar Muhammad Khalaf). Unfortunately, the squad found soon found out that the target had been detained a few months prior. At 0450, Second Platoon at ECP North confirmed positive identification of three MAMs with AK-47 rifles and engaged those MAMs with 25 rounds of 7.62. The MAMs egressed to the East and the Marines were unable to conduct a battle damage assessment. There were no friendly casualties. On 02 May, at 0700, Fourth Platoon provided force protection at the JCC for the Iraqi Police Screening. The platoon reported that forty Iraqis were screened. Second Platoon conducted a BZO range at Camp Ramadi. At 1030, Second Platoon, at ECP North, received small arms fire from the Small Water Treatment Plant. During the engagement, two civilians were shot. One was shot in the chest and the other was shot in the leg. Second Platoon provided the medevac to Charlie Medical. After the engagement, Second Platoon and a Platoon from Weapons Company conducted a sweep of the Small Water Treatment Plant. On 03 May, India 3, at ECP North, detained a MAM for testing positive on an explosive residue test. While searching the MAM's vehicle, they found a Seneo base station and a phone with loose wires. There were also wires coming from the trunk of the car that did not connect to anything. On 05 May, ECP North received 5 rounds of small arms fire from the Northeast. They returned fire with 20 rounds 7.62 but could not confirm BDA. There were no friendly casualties. On 06 May India 4 received 15 rounds small arms fire while occupying an OP in the vicinity of North Cinema St. They returned fire with 30 rnds of 5.56 and could not confirm BDA. There were no casualties. On 12 May, India Company minus conducted a cache sweep in the G1 area. In the "Honeycomb" building, India 3 found (1) 160mm rnd, (4) 120mm rnds, (12) 60mm rnds, (4) 82mm rnds, det. cord, a small bag of C4, a time fuze, and IED making material. EOD arrived on scene and detonated the cache on site. On 14 May, India 4 was occupying an OP at Cream and Give Me and received fire from one building just east of the Al Quadar Mosque and one building on the northeast corner of North Cinema and Starbucks. The Marines positively identified two to three MAMs and returned fire with (3) 40mm, and (20) 5.56 link. They were unable to conduct a BDA and there were no casualties. Later on that day, as the Marines

extracted from the OP, an IED detonated on the dismounts as they exited the building. There were no casualties. On 15 May, India Company completed Reset the Force training. On 18 May, India Company conducted a company size census operation in the G3, G4 area. At 1140, 4th Platoon hit an IED that resulted in a vehicle K-kill. The insurgents responded with a complex attack against every India unit operating at the time. The fire fight lasted approximately 3 hours and resulted with one friendly WIA. Throughout the firefight, the Marines were unable to conduct any enemy BDA. On 26 May, Third Platoon was conducting a Mosque recording of the G4 area. While dismounted, the patrol received a single enemy sniper shot resulting one (1) friendly KIA. On 27 May, India Company reconfirmed BZO of all weapons on the ranges at Camp Ramadi and Hurricane Point. On 31 May, India Company held a memorial service at Camp Blue Diamond for our KIA.

KILO COMPANY

On 01 May 2006, Kilo had one (1) FWIA, wound to the left leg. On 13 May 2006, Kilo Company was conducting a 24 hour OP mission to the immediate north of OP Horea. During an hour long fire fight Kilo Company sustained one (1) FKIA from a sniper. Immediate direct fire assets were fired in support of the ingress of the medevac convoy by the platoon and by the Marines on post at OP Horea. After their departure to Charlie Medical direct and indirect fire suppression was used in support of that platoons egress to OP Horea.

During the month of May, Kilo Company fought several complex attacks at both the Government Center and Op Horea. On 15 May 2006 the Government Center came under attack by a large number of insurgents who engaged all posts on the north, south and east. This attack comprised of squad size or larger insurgent elements. Insurgents fired IDF (60mm, 82mm mortars), medium and heavy machine guns, and SAF. Kilo Company sustained no damage to personnel or equipment. One (1) GLMR rocket was fired at TRP Battle Ship Grey building, and One (1) LMAV was fired at TRP Rasheed Hotel. On 17 May 2006 an SVBIED blue bongo truck filled with propane tanks turned east on MSR Michigan. Post Bravo engaged with M2 .50 Cal and destroyed the vehicle with One (1) KIA. On 18 May 2006 the Government Center received heavy fire from north. One (1) LMAV was fired at TRP Rasheed Hotel, two (2) GLMRS on building north of TRP Rasheed Hotel, and one (1) LMAV on the Ministry of Health building. 25 May 2006 OP Horea engaged a fire truck that tried to enter their barrier plan on MSR Michigan and was disabled at CP 296.

For the remainder of the month Kilo Company has continued with both internal and external force protection projects at the Government Center and OP Horea, with the introduction of new barriers and post fortification. Kilo Company has changed patrolling tactics by conducting raids on houses or patrolling areas of interest at night. Kilo Company continues to conduct enduring tasks with site security at the Government Center and OP Horea and keeping MSR Michigan open to coalition traffic between CP 295 to CP 296.

LIMA COMPANY

The month of May saw Lima Company continuing its enduring tasks of providing over watch of MSR Michigan from OPVA and Snakepit. We also continued providing security for the West Ramadi Police Station. Company L also began establishing relationships with the Sheiks and Imams in our AO. Additionally, select members of our company began

providing instruction to the Iraqi police officers in urban patrolling and pistol marksmanship. The first week of May brought three (3) engagements, the first being a mortar attack on Snakepit which resulted in eight (8) Iraqi Policemen being injured and transported to Charlie Medical by Lima Company. Then, on 03 May Lima 3 engaged one insurgent emplacing an Improvised Explosive Device, resulting in one EWIA. On 07 May Lima 1 engaged an insurgent maneuvering with an AK-47 on their position, resulting in 1 EWIA.

During the second week of May the company completed Reset the Forces Training, and conducted assessments on civilian water and electrical stations in our AO. Then on 10 May Lima 1 was attacked by an IED resulting in a mobility kill on the MTRV, but no casualties. Combat train assisted in the towing of that vehicle back to Camp Ramadi.

The last two weeks saw our company focusing on counter-IED ambushes along MSR's in our zone. The company was very successful in this endeavor, with First Platoon Third Squad killing one insurgent laying an IED in on 21 May and on the following day killing two more insurgents attacking their positions. Additionally, Snakepit continued to come under repeated attacks by mortars. With attacks taking place on 22 and 23 May, resulting in no damage to personnel or equipment

WEAPONS COMPANY

Weapons Company continued executing its primary mission of keeping the MSR/ASRs open and being in General Support of the battalion. Weapons Company patrolled the AO with security patrols and SVCPS and maintained the southern ECP. The patrols and the ECP detained several individuals engaging in suspicious activities and had numerous engagements with the enemy. The company continued clearing IEDs with TF Dagger, Army Engineers, and though the acute observation of the Marines on patrol.

The company had a distinguished visitor, Former Under Secretary of Defense and noted author, Bing West. He gave a PME to the SNCOs and Officers on his thoughts on Iraq and its' future. Mr. West went on several patrols gathering information for his upcoming book.

On 12 May at 0800, First Platoon, acting on intelligence from the Bn S-2, conducted a disruption mission on a known insurgent safe house disguised as an auto garage at the intersection of 20th and Baseline roads. North of the objective, the platoon received heavy SAF but it was suppressed before they got to the objective. Receiving information from UAV feed from the Battalion COC, the platoon searched a vehicle on the objective and found a cache of RPG's, small arms, and ammo. The vehicle was blown in place.

Using the information gathered from the disruption mission and intelligence from S-2, the Company conducted a cordon and search of the same building on the night of 12 May into the morning of 13 May. While Second Platoon cleared the egress route of IEDs with Wpns Company Commander and Army engineers, First Platoon conducted the cordon and search. Armor, in support of First Platoon, conducted a mechanical breach of the building and then engaged a dirt pile, which was a suspected IED and SAFs cache, with (1) 120mm round. 1st platoon cordoned and searched the building finding a suspected VBIED, which was destroyed, several tunnels with suspected IED making material inside and other suspicious items. Using the cleared route the company egressed at approximately 0430. By 0500 all Weapons Company elements had returned to friendly lines without incident.

On 18 May, First Platoon conducted cordon and search and screening missions in the Al Sharikah district while reinforcing India Co. The section hit an IED near Give Me and Racetrack and pursued the triggerman several blocks. They detained the triggerman and continued with the planned mission. While conducting SVCPs in the southeast portion of the district the section was engaged by a sniper, which was followed by heavy SAF from the Al Samam mosque. The patrol returned fire with a heavy amount of 7.62mm, .50 cal, and 40mm. The patrol sustained (2) FWIA and conducted a self-medavac.

During the engagement with 1st Plt, India Co came under heavy fire, also in the Al Sharikah district and had a disabled vehicle. Second Platoon was sent as the QRF with Armor to reinforce. Once the QRF was on scene, they secured the area and the recovery of the vehicle was made while supporting the retrograde of India Co.

H & S COMPANY

On 01 May, a FRAGO was disseminated that changed the bridge closure time to 2000, vice 1900. As a direct result, the number of escalation of force situations initiated by the Hurricane Point Guard Force decreased significantly since Daylight Savings Time took effect. Additionally, the engineers conducted three missions to lay jersey barriers on the Hurricane Point barrier plan, thereby reducing the risk of a SVBIED. Administratively, the Guard Force changed out about a squad's size element towards the end of the month by switching individuals within H&S sections and providing combat replacements to Weapon's Company.

On 02 May, an assassination attempt was made on the Governor's convoy. While the Commanding Officer's PSD was escorting him to the Government Center, a taxi entered the convoy and exploded on the Governor's vehicle. The assassination attempt was unsuccessful. PSD sustained one (1) minor WIA, but was able to continue combat operations. In addition to conducting several mounted patrols, PSD escorted several dignitaries throughout the month to include the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Inspector General of the Marine Corps, and the Commanding General.

The Civil Affairs Group (CAG) conducted several street sweeps of Route Michigan. They also worked on several projects out of the PCMOC.

The THF processed sixty two (62) detainees during the month of May, forty six (46) of which were routed up to the Regimental Detention Facility (RDF) in Camp Ramadi. Although there was a drop in the overall number of detainees, there was a drastic increase in the percentage of detainee forwarded up to the RDF.

Several projects were completed aboard Hurricane Point, while others are on going. The engineers complete all force protection to include HESCO around all living and working spaces. The Camp Commandant and Assistant Camp Commandant worked continuously to keep the ACs recharged and the generators working. One project that will continue through the month of June will be putting end caps on the scud bunkers. Finally, a project that was started at the beginning of the month and will continue throughout the deployment is filling sandbags. In an effort to help reinforce FOB throughout the battalion's AO, the Marines of Hurricane Point have undertaken a Herculean task of producing approximately 1000 a day by filling a sand bag before every meal. Every Marine fills a sandbag before eating and it is immediately loaded into a 7 ton and transported to either the OP VA or the Government Center.

Command Chronology 01 MAY 06 to 31 MAY 06
Section III: Sequential Listing of Significant Events

<u>DATES</u>	<u>EVENTS</u>
01 MAY 06	KILO RECIEVES ONE FWIA AT GOV CENTER
01 MAY 06	SNAKEPIT HIT BY 8 RND OF 82MM IDF RESULTING IN 8 IRAQI POLICE CASUALTIES
01 MAY 06	BATTALION S-6 CONDUCTES EPLRS OTAR
02 MAY 06	FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON THE GOVERNOR
02 MAY 06	ECP NORTH ENGAGES 3 MAMS WITH AK-47s AFTER RECEIVING FIRE FROM SMALL WATER TREATMENT PLANT. TWO CIVILIANS WERE INJURED IN FIREFIGHT. THEY WERE EVACUATED TO CHARLIE MED
02-04 MAY 06	INDIA CO. PROVIDES PROTECTION FOR IP SCREENING AT JCC
05 MAY 06	WIRE MARINES REPAIR PHONE LINES AT GOVERNMENT CENTER
06-07 MAY 06	INSPECTOR GENERAL OF MARINE CORPS INSPECTION
07 MAY 06	INSPECTOR GENERAL OF USMC VISITS HURRICANE POINT
10-14 MAY 06	FIBER OPTIC CABLE RUN FROM HURRICANE POINT TO BLUE DIAMOND
12 MAY 06	INDIA CO. CONDUCTS CACHE SWEEP IN G1 SECTOR LARGE CACHE WAS DISCOVERED AND DESTROYED AT THE "HONEY COMB" BUILDING
13 MAY 06	KILO RECIEVES ONE RND PERCISION FIRE WHILE CONDUCTING OP OPERATIONS NORTH OF OP HOREA RESULTING IN ONE FKIA
14-19 MAY 06	S-4 ASSISTS 3-2-1 IA BATTALION/MTT TEAM IN PACK OUT AND MOVEMENT TO FALLUJAH
15 MAY 06	COMPLEX ATTACK ON GOVERNMENT CENTER ONE GLMR AND ONE LMAV EXPENDED
15 MAY 06	RESET THE FORCE TRAINING COMPLETE
15-17 MAY 06	PREP FOR OPERATION GENERAL HOSPITAL
17 MAY 06	KILO ENGAGES SVBIED ON MICHIGAN RESULTING IN ONE EKIA
18 MAY 06	INDIA COMPANY SUSTAINS COMPLEX ATTACK WHILE IN THE G3 /G4 DISTRICT RESULTING IN ONE FWIA FIRE FIGHT LASTED APPROXIMATELY 3 HOURS
18 MAY 06	COMPLEX ATTACK AT GOV CENTER TWO GLMR AND ONE LMAV EXPENDED
23 MAY 06	SNAKEPIT HIT BY 6 RND OF 82MM IDF
25 MAY 06	FIRE TRUCK SVBIED ATTEMPTS TO ENTER OP HOREA BARRIER PLAN AND IS ENGAGED
26 MAY 06	WHILE CONDUCTING A MOSQUE RECORDING OPERATION IN G4, 3 RD PLATOON INDIA CO. RECIEVES ONE ROUND PRECISION FIRE RESULTING IN ONE FRIENDLY KIA
29 MAY 06	BATTALION RECIEVES FIRST SHIPMENT OF 19 NEW UAH'S WITH CHAMELEON HPJ'S AND MCTAG TURRETS
30 MAY 06	COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS VISITS HURRICANE POINT

Command Chronology 01 MAY 06 to 31 MAY 06
Section IV: Supporting Documents

Enclosures

- (1) "Transition teams focus on teaching Iraqi forces" Cpl. Joseph Digirolamo, January 31, 2006. www.usmc.mil
(2) "Deploying infantry Marines raid MOUT town" Cpl. Joseph Digirolamo, February 17, 2006. www.usmc.mil

MARES Reportable Equipment:

TAMCN	NOMENCLATURE	AUTH	ONHAND	QTY DEF
A0067	AN/MRC-148	8	8	0
A0425	M-DACT	11	11	0
A0918	AN/PSC-5	1	1	0
A1225	EPLRS NETWORK MAN	1	2	0
A1935	MRC-138B (V)	5	5	0
A1955	AN/MRC-138B	1	1	0
A1957	AN/MRC-145 A	9	7	2
A2042	AN/PRC-138, AN/PRC-150	7	13	0
A2043	MBITR URBAN VER	45	92	0
A2044	MBITR MARITIME VERS	8	7	51
A2065	AN/PRC-104B	4	4	0
A2068	AN/PRC-117F	4	5	0
A2069	AN/PRC-113 (V) 3	4	4	0
A2070	AN/PRC-119/A	41	68	0
A2073	AN/PRC-119-D	3	0	3
A2074	AN/VRC-88D	17	21	0
A2075	AN/VRC-89D	2	2	0
A2078	AN/VRC-92D	3	4	0
A2079	AN/PRC-119F	44	46	0
A2152	AV/VSQ2C (EPLRS)	11	21	0
A2167	AN/VRC-88	8	14	0
A2168	AN/VRC-89	2	1	1
A2169	AN/VRC-90	8	2	6
A2505	SB-3614 (V)/TT	1	2	0
A2508	SWITHING TELEPHONE AUTO	1	1	0
A8100	AK648/U	17	24	0
B0012	AIR COND 1800BTU/HR 60HZ1		1	0
B0589	EXCAVATOR, ACE	1	1	0
B0730	MEP-016B GENERATOR	16	10	6
B0891	MEP-803 GENERATOR, 10KW	6	11	0
B0953	MEP-805 GENERATOR, 30KW	5	4	1
B1021	MEP-806 GENERATOR, 60KW	2	1	1
B1580	SIXCON FUEL MOD	2	2	0
B2085	SIXCON FUEL TK	3	2	1
B2460	TRACTOR, FULL TRACK	1	1	0
B2462	TRACTOR, FULL TRACK D7G	1	1	1
B2483	LOADER BACKHOE CAT420D	0	1	0
B2561	EXTENDABLE BOOM FORKLIFT0		1	0
B2566	TRUCK, FORKLIFT 4000LBS	1	1	0
B2567	TRACTOR, ARTICULATING	1	1	0
B2685	WELDING MACHINE	1	0	1
D0001	UAH TRUCK UTILITY 4X4	65	137	0
D0003	AMK 23	26	26	0

D0004	AMK 25	6	6	0
D0198	TRUCK, MTRV AMK23/25	0	0	30
D0880	M149 WATER TRAILER	7	8	0
D1001	TRK AMB, HMMWV M997	2	2	0
D1002	TRK AMB HMMWV, M1035	4	3	1
D1073	TRUCK, DUMP, MTRV	2	2	0
D1125	TRK HMMWV TOW M1045	8	4	4
D1158	TRK CARGO, HMMWV M1123	60	69	0
D1159	TRK ARMT HMMWV M1043	16	15	0
D1213	MTRV WRECKCER/MK36	1	2	0
E0180	CIRCLE AIMING M2A2	4	5	0
E0207	COMMAND LAUNCH, M98A1	8	8	0
E0330	AN/UAS-12C A/C	8	8	0
E0915	SMAW MK153	19	21	0
E0935	LAUNCHER TOW, M220E4	8	8	0
E0980	MACH GUN, CAL .50 M2	18	21	0
E0989	MACH GUN, 240G 7.62MM	41	51	0
E0994	MACH GUN, 40MM MK-19	18	20	0
E1065	MORTAR, 60MM, M224	9	12	0
E1095	MORTAR, 81MM, M252	8	8	0
E1460	RIFLE, SNIPER M40A3	8	10	0
E1475	RIFLE, SNIPER .50 CAL	2	2	0
E1911	TOW TEST SIGHT/ TSM-152	2	2	0
E1912	TOW TEST SIGHT/ TSM-140B2	1	1	1

The Most Dangerous Place

On a harrowing trip inside Iraq's toughest city, TIME gets an up-close view of the U.S.'s daily battles against the insurgents. An eyewitness account reveals why the war remains as deadly as ever

By [MICHAEL WARE/RAMADI](#)

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Posted Sunday, May 21, 2006

It's another sweltering afternoon in the most dangerous place in Iraq, and the men of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines, are looking to pick a fight. First Lieut. Grier Jones splits his 30-odd-man platoon into two squads and sets them loose on the streets of Ramadi. They run block to block, covering one another as they sprint across intersections. Insurgents bob their heads out of homes to catch a glimpse of the Marines--"turkey peeking," as the troops call it--a sign that they are preparing to attack. "We come out here every day, and we get shot at," Jones tells an Iraqi woman who speaks American-accented English. "Where are the bad guys?" She falls silent. Outside, a blue sedan peels away. "Watch that car," a Marine yells, sensing a possible ambush.

His instincts are right. At the next intersection, the Marines duck into a house. Suddenly a machine gun lets rip, spewing bullets around them. "Where's it coming from?" a Marine yells. Immediately, shooting opens up from a second direction. Jones gets his men to the roof to repel the two-sided attack. "Rocket!" screams a grunt, unleashing an AT4 rocket at one of the insurgent positions. Men reel from the blast's concussion. The shooting from the east stops. But as Jones peers over a cement wall to locate the second ambush position, a 7.62-mm round whizzes by. "Whoa, that went right over my head," he says, smiling. As the Marines on the roof fire at the insurgents, Jones orders a squad to push toward the enemy position. Then the enemy weapons go quiet; the insurgents are apparently withdrawing to conserve their energy. Jones radios back to his commanders. "We saw the enemy do a banana peel back, then peel north." He chuckles. "This is every day in Ramadi."

There's no reason to believe that the Americans' battle against Iraqi insurgents is going to get better. With U.S. support for the war sinking, the Bush Administration is eager to show that sufficient progress is being made toward quelling the insurgency to justify a drawdown of the 133,000 troops in Iraq. The U.S. praised the naming of a new Iraqi Cabinet last week, even though it includes some widely mistrusted figures from the previous government. And even as commanders try to turn combat duties over to Iraqi forces and pull U.S. troops back from the front lines, parts of Iraq remain as deadly as ever. At least 18 U.S. troops died last week, raising the total killed since the invasion in March 2003 to 2,456.

Nowhere is the fighting more intense than in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province and for the moment the seething heart of the Sunni-led insurgency. The city remains a stronghold of insurgents loyal to Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, who U.S. intelligence believes is hiding in an area north of the city. In recent weeks, the soldiers and Marines in Ramadi have come under regular assault, forcing commanders last week to order reinforcements to the besieged city. In the past year, the Army's 2/28th Brigade Combat Team, the unit the Marines are attached to, has lost 79 men in Ramadi--yet the brigade's commander, Colonel John Gronski, says, "The level of violence remains about the same."

TIME spent a week with Kilo Company, the 120-person unit that goes head to head with the insurgents every day. The goal is to lure al-Qaeda into attacks, which Kilo Company has been doing successfully: in a single week, five men were wounded, three foot patrols were ambushed, and there were unrelenting attacks from small-arms fire and mortars. The experience of the Marines in Ramadi illuminates some of the shortcomings of the U.S. strategy for defeating the insurgency. The commander has only one brigade to secure the town, even though U.S. officers say privately that at least three are needed. Among the troops, frustration is growing: many officers say that the U.S. is too lenient in its dealings with the enemy, allowing too many captured insurgents to go free, and that soldiers can do little more than act as international police. Others claim that superiors are overlooking their reports about conditions on the ground. If the U.S. and its Iraqi allies are making progress in eroding the appeal of the resistance, the men in Ramadi don't see it. Says an American officer: "This s___ ain't going anywhere."

From the instant Kilo Company set foot in Ramadi, the Marines knew they were in the middle of an insurgent hotbed. Lance Corporal Jose (Syc) Tasayco was on the unit's earliest patrol outside the wire in March. "The first day was an eye opener. We got contact, that first patrol. It was like, wow, we couldn't believe it, but we got outta there good. Nobody got hit," he says. The Marines are based in the battle-scarred Government Center in the middle of Ramadi, a magnet for al-Qaeda attacks--one of the few ways the Marines can find their enemy. The precarious outpost also protects the nascent local government, which operates out of its confines.

Sitting sentry in the center of town, the Marines are a ripe target for insurgent assaults. On April 24, mortars begin crashing down on the compound, and the shuddering impacts force the grunts to take cover in their rooftop bunkers. From an alley in the northeast, an insurgent fires a rocket-propelled grenade that slams a wall along the narrow mouth of a sandbagged gun pit. Shards of hot metal penetrate the opening, hitting Corporal Jonathan Wilson. Blood pours down his neck. "Corpsman up, corpsman up," he cries--asking for a medic to head to the roof. He runs downstairs and collapses into the arms of a sergeant.

Meanwhile, shrapnel has shredded the left thumb of Lance Corporal Adam Sardinias. But he keeps his finger on the trigger of a grenade launcher, and it's not until another Marine arrives to relieve him that he finally turns for the slit doorway. "Let me get outta here," he says. "I'm hit pretty bad." But the battle goes on: below the Marines' outpost, al-Qaeda fighters toting AK-47s dart in and out of view. As blood from Sardinias and Wilson pools

at his feet, Sergeant William Morrow grips the grenade launcher. A fellow Marine spots an insurgent in the open. "Waste his ass," Tasayco urges as they open fire on the enemy below.

Despite heavy losses among the insurgents--112 were killed in one week in April--they have proved resistant to the U.S.'s onslaughts. Intelligence officials increasingly refer to them as a "legitimate local resistance," but it's al-Qaeda that drives them. Long ago, al-Zarqawi's network settled in Ramadi and, in essence, hijacked the homegrown fight. Although Iraqi groups have bucked al-Zarqawi's authority periodically--most notably in last year's referendum and December election, when they opted to vote, forcing him to stand idly by--al-Qaeda maintains its grip.

U.S. efforts to woo Iraqi groups were beginning to pay dividends, as the city's tribal and insurgent leaders gave their approval for young Sunnis to join the new police force. Recruitment mostly ran at about 40 a month, though in January, 1,000 showed up to join. But al-Qaeda responded by sending a chest-vest suicide bomber into the queue of applicants, killing about 40 Iraqis, wounding 80, and killing two Americans. When the recruits returned days later, al-Zarqawi followed up with a wave of seven assassinations of tribal sheiks. "That hurt us a lot," says Gronski.

Given the ability of al-Zarqawi's men to melt into the city, Kilo Company has few options but to search for the insurgents on block-by-block foot patrols through the worst areas. It's perilous work. On one morning this month, Tasayco and Corporal Nathan Buck take their squad out to commandeer a small shopping complex, which will give cover for the rest of the platoon to push east. On the roof, Buck, his helmet emblazoned with the words DEATH DEALERS in thick letters, warns his Marines to stay alert. When Tasayco sees movement in a nearby window, Buck rises to check it out. An insurgent sniper fires at his head, cracking a round into the lip of the cement wall in front of him. "I should be dead right now," Buck says to Tasayco with a laugh.

It's not long before another round flies over their heads, this time from a little farther to the east. The sniper is moving, hunting them. Minutes pass with no more firing. But Tasayco is uneasy. The order comes over the radio to move back to base. "Be careful, we're gonna get hit," a Marine says as the men drop to the pavement. It's only 150 yards back to the Government Center, but every inch is hard won. Lance Corporal Phillip Tussey pauses on the edge of a small alley. With another Marine covering him, he makes a dash to cross the five yards of open ground. He doesn't get more than a couple of steps when a shot rings out. He's cut down mid-stride, hit in the thigh. The men around him open fire. Within seconds, insurgents start shooting from the opposite direction. A Marine tries to drag Tussey by a leg toward a humvee but gets stranded out in the open. Tasayco bolts forward and grabs the wounded man by the arm. Someone else joins him. Still firing, they shove him into the vehicle. Tasayco takes cover and looks for the shooter. "Where the hell is this guy at?" he hollers. No one answers. "C'mon, everybody, let's go. Pick it up. Get the f___ out of here, man," Tasayco shouts. All his men can do is run.

So why does Ramadi remain beyond the U.S.'s control? Part of the problem, many officers say, is that the troops' authority to act is constrained by politics. Soldiers cannot lock up suspected insurgents without first getting an arrest warrant and a sworn statement from two witnesses. And those who are convicted often receive jail sentences that are shorter than a grunt's tour of Iraq. "We keep seeing guys we arrested coming back out, and things get worse again," says an intelligence officer.

The bigger problem, though, is one that few in the military command want to hear: there aren't enough troops to do the job. "There's a realization, as every military commander knows, that you cannot be strong everywhere," says Gronski of Ramadi. "In the outlying areas, we think in terms of an economy of force where we are willing to accept risk by not placing as many troops." But while Gronski says his fighting strength is "appropriate," other commanders bristle at the limitations. "I can't believe it each time the Secretary of Defense talks about reducing force," says a senior U.S. officer. War planners in Iraq say just getting a handle on Ramadi demands three times as many soldiers as are there now. Several U.S. commanders say they won't ask superiors for more troops or plan large-scale operations because doing so would expose problems in the U.S.'s strategy that no one wants to acknowledge. "It's what I call the Big Lie," a high-ranking U.S. commander told TIME.

To be fair, gains are being made in Ramadi with the Iraqi army, the police and the young provincial government. A brigade intelligence officer says that "we are not getting excited because this is a long process--though we are winning. The tide is turning." But for those in the midst of the battle, that can sometimes be hard to see. "No matter what they say about the rest of the country, it ain't like this place," says a battalion officer in the thick of the fight. "It's the worst place in the world."

Iraq's Mean Streets

U.S. forces battle on in the heart of insurgent territory

By Ben Gilbert

5/29/06

RAMADI--The war in Iraq seems to be everywhere and nowhere all at once, judging from the daily score card of car bombings, kidnappings, and attacks against oil pipelines and whatever else presents a target of opportunity. But if there's a front line in the fight between American forces and insurgents, it runs straight through Ramadi's devastated downtown.

After some three years of war, parts of the city look like Beirut after 15 years of civil war. Abandoned buildings sag under the weight of broken floors. Tens of thousands of bullets have torn the facades from buildings and chewed unnatural shapes in walls. Beyond the pools of sewage, piles of rubble, burned-out cars, and broken storefronts, the downtown streets are abandoned.

Razor wire and concrete barriers surround the Provincial Government Center compound, where more than 100 U.S. marines are hunkered down defending the buildings that house the offices of the governor and police chief. "You hear folks talk about Iraq as counterinsurgency," says 30-year-old Capt. Andrew Del Gaudio of Bronx, N.Y., commander of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, the unit responsible for downtown Ramadi. "That holds true for about 99 percent of Iraq. This 1 percent that is in and around central Ramadi, this is a full-blown kinetic fight on a daily basis."

Ramadi is a hornet's nest. The capital and largest city in western Anbar province--an area American troops often call the "wild west"--this Euphrates River city of some 400,000 mainly Sunni Muslim Arabs was once home to many Iraqi military officers who prospered under Saddam Hussein's rule. U.S. officials say that 80 percent of the insurgent fighters here are Iraqis but that foreigners play a role in planning and financing attacks. This arguably is the center of the Sunni-dominated insurgency and, on some days, accounts for about a third of all the violence in Iraq. "It's a tremendous amount of violence," says a U.S. military intelligence officer, "for such a small area."

The 5,000-strong U.S. brigade deployed in Ramadi has lost 79 men and women over the past 11 months. In just the past two months, Del Gaudio's Kilo Company has lost five. Three marines and a sailor were killed April 2 by a large roadside bomb that destroyed the last truck in a convoy. And 20-year-old Lance Cpl. Rick James of Seaford, Del., who joined the Marines a day after turning 18, was shot in the head May 13 by a sniper while at an observation post. (James was proud to serve and felt he was "making a difference," his mother, Carol James, told the

Associated Press, but Ramadi could be discouraging: "He hated it. I mean, it's a filthy place, it's hot.")

"Destroy the enemy." The Kilo Company marines live and patrol out of the heavily fortified and sandbagged provincial government compound. Five minutes from the main American base here, the government center is another world. There is no running water or air conditioning, no showers or hot food.

Nearly every marine has been shot at numerous times, and nobody even flinches at the sound of an M-1 Abrams tank firing its 120-mm gun a few blocks away. The whoosh of a U.S. shoulder-fired rocket from the roof is common, followed by cheers from marines at the sound of impact. U.S. forces clash with insurgents, typically, five times a day, and the government compound comes under attack once "every three or four days," from sometimes as many as 60 or 70 insurgents using mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, and machine guns. The marines here routinely call in airstrikes, artillery fire, and GPS-guided rockets fired from dozens of miles away to destroy entire buildings they suspect are sheltering insurgents. "In order to beat the wolf off the door, sometimes you've gotta use things that the enemy doesn't think you will use," Del Gaudio says. "I'm not willing to write an American mother or father and tell them that I could have used this and I didn't. I personally believe that there is no limit, that I will not stop at anything to destroy the enemy."

Yet the enemy keeps coming. In one week in late April, the American command here estimated it killed more than 100 insurgents. "It will stop, it will start again, they've got so many people," says 30-year-old Sgt. Edward Somuk of New Milford, Conn. "You could blow the s---out of a building with a JDAM [bunkerbusting bomb] from an F-16 or F-18 ... the next day there will be somebody else in there. It just never ends."

On patrols, Kilo Company marines run, rather than walk, to evade snipers and ambushes. They crawl over walls that separate houses to mask their movements through a neighborhood. And although the marines routinely go out looking to tangle with insurgent fighters and kill them, they rule only where they stand. "Once you leave that area," says Kilo's 25-year-old 1st Lt. John Roussos of Princeton, N.J., "[the insurgents] run right back in."

The fact that Kilo Company marines are even *in* the government center differentiates Ramadi from Fallujah, the famous insurgent stronghold in Anbar province that U.S. forces were unable to enter until a major operation devastated the city in November 2004. There are rumors of a similar assault to rout insurgents from Ramadi. But Col. John Gronski, commander of the 2nd Brigade of the 28th Pennsylvania National Guard Division responsible for the Ramadi area of operations, says the American plan is long term. "We believe even though it is one of the most violent parts of Iraq, we have made significant progress here," he says. "The way ahead is to work with Iraqi security forces to

help develop their capabilities to help secure Ramadi. Once they have the capability to secure the city, coalition forces will reduce their presence in the city."

There are now three times as many Iraqi soldiers in Ramadi, Gronski says, as when his brigade arrived nearly a year ago. Iraqi soldiers--mostly Shiites from other parts of Iraq--helped clear out and hold a former insurgent stronghold north of the city.

Efforts to dispatch local Sunni soldiers to Ramadi have proved as difficult as building up the local police. The police force here dissolved in May 2005, and insurgents overran their stations. The Iraqi Army later looted the police headquarters, stripping out even the wiring from the newly renovated building, as well as parts from some 40 U.S.-supplied police vehicles. There are now two police stations in the city, with 400 police in uniform and more than 1,000 in training. At this point, none of the officers set foot outside their stations while undergoing more thorough training from their American mentors. And the most recent recruiting effort, under the shadow of insurgent threats, drew only 30 applicants, not the 500 anticipated by the provincial police chief.

Intimidation. Pay is also a problem, says U.S. Army Maj. Chuck Buxton, the Provincial Police Transition Team chief for Anbar province. "The provincial treasury officer has not come to work in two weeks," Buxton says. "And so we have 3,303 [police] who haven't been paid for March, April, and we're into May already." Buxton says the treasurer may be too scared to come to work--with good reason. Insurgents have tried to kill Anbar's governor, Mamoun al-Awani, 29 times in less than a year, and his predecessor was kidnapped and later killed during an American battle with his captors.

Ramadi had seen a glimmer of hope last December. Voters turned up at the polls in record numbers as local resistance fighters guarded voting stations. Local sheiks, insurgent leaders, and religious figures had started to meet with the U.S. military to form a provincial security team because both sides shared one common goal: The Americans wanted to go home, and the Ramadi residents wanted them to go home, too. In January, 1,000 local men showed up for a drive to recruit local police. "Ramadi started to go in the right direction," says Lt. Col. Richard Miller, an American artillery commander who also works on reaching out to Ramadi's community leaders. "Local insurgents decided, 'Hey, you know, we need to get on board with this movement.'"

But on January 5, a suicide bomber disguised himself as a recruit and killed at least 70 police applicants (and a U.S. marine and soldier). Then, insurgents began assassinating tribal leaders. Local leaders, says Miller, now find themselves in a withering crossfire. The foreign and al Qaeda fighters initially welcomed by Ramadi's citizens are now killing off or intimidating anyone who tries to cooperate with the Americans. Seven local leaders have been killed since

January. "From there things kind of went downhill, and they've been going downhill for the past couple months," Miller says. "We're still going down once a week, meeting with the provincial governor and council, but now [only one or two] sheiks show up, and not 20 or 25 that we had previously."

The marines in Kilo Company seem caught in the middle. Their mission appears to be buying time for the Iraqi Police and Army to develop their capabilities-- which, for now, means pushing back as best they can against insurgent attacks. "Many people ask ... what does it take to help Ramadi, what it takes to get rid of the insurgency?" Kilo's Del Gaudio says. "It is exactly what we are doing right now: going on the offense and killing these people.... They'll keep coming, and we'll keep killing them. Eventually people will get the message."

